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Testimony before the Commission on Bullying Prevention

Good afternoon Madame Attorney General and esteemed members of the committee. I am a representative of the Western Mass. Regional Student Advisory Council and a senior at Monson High School. I am here to discuss my recommendations for parent involvement in an incident of bullying and improvements I see that can be made to the bullying legislation.

To address the point of parent involvement, I agree that we should have programs made for parents in order to teach them how to recognize bullying. However, I do understand that it is nearly impossible to force parents to go. I do believe that there needs to be a campaign to stop the excuses. The most noted excuses are “kids will be kids”, “just ignore them” and “they just like you.” These need to stop. The definition of bullying is “the repeated, and unprovoked harassment of a group or individual.”

Targetbully.com The excuses need to stop because they teach kids that harassment is acceptable. It's not.

Next, I think that the bullying legislation is widely perceived as negative by high school students. There is so much focus placed on the punishment of the offender, but I think there needs to be more focus placed on the victim. It happens so often that the victims of bullying don't know how to say “That's not okay”. The only reason my past experience with bullying does not bother me as much is because of the leadership opportunities I was presented with: MassSTAR student leadership group; the Monson Debate Society; and the Western Mass. Regional Student Advisory Council. Perhaps if there were more leadership opportunities of a communications class in every school, it could reflect the bullying legislation in a more positive light. In this uphill battle against bullying, communication is key.

Thank you Madame Attorney General and esteemed members of the committee. I'm proud to say that I am part of the generation that eliminates “kids will be kids”, and replaces it with “that's not okay”.